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the section being thrown under the knife blade, may, however, be obviated either by carefully trimming the vertical face in case it is accidentally painted (to allow for which the *hither margin* of the paraffine may be left broader than the other three), or by drawing the knife *slowly*, so that the first indication of a failure to cut through the vertical film may be recognized and the section held in place on the blade by a slight pressure with a soft brush, whereupon the knife will cut through the film and leave the section free.

If by chance the paraffine block has been painted with too much collodion or with collodion which is too concentrated, thus leaving a shiny surface, the film should be at once broken by pressing it gently two or three times in quick succession with the end of a rather stiff, blunt, *dry* brush. This enables the collodion to dry quickly and thus prevents the softening of the paraffine.

If the sections have a tendency to curl they may be flattened out on the slide by means of a brush, for a section thus impregnated with collodion may be handled during the first few seconds after contact with the Schällibaum mixture with much greater impunity than one not so treated. If the collodion has been too much thinned with ether, the fact will become apparent from the softening of the paraffine, and may be remedied by waiting for the evaporation of the ether, or by adding thicker collodion.

This process can be in no way considered as a substitute for the ordinary method of cutting objects since it requires more time and closer attention to details, but for those cases where there is a liability to crumbling, or where sections of sufficient thinness cannot be procured free from folds, it will doubtless be found very serviceable.—*E. L. Mark, Mus. Comp. Zööl., Cambridge, Jan., 1885.*

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## SCIENTIFIC NEWS.

— At a late meeting of the Liverpool Microscopical Society, Mr. A. Norman Tate read a paper, which is reported in the *English Mechanic*, on the microscopical examination of potable water. After alluding to the impossibility of always determining by chemical means alone whether a water is or is not fit for dietetic purposes, he proceeded to speak of the importance of microscopical investigation in relation to water-supply, pointing out that it afforded better opportunity of determining the character of organic impurities, and that it might frequently assist in ascertaining the character of the mineral constituents. He considered the arbitrary standards of purity as regards organic constituents, set up by some water analysts as being unsafe to use, without knowing the exact nature of such matters. And in deciding this the microscope could help. He then proceeded to speak of in-

vestigations concerning the minute animals and plants in waters contaminated with sewage, &c., and then described different modes of collecting and examining waters microscopically, and urged the importance of further investigation, so as to ascertain how far the organized matters present in water are capable of developing disease, and how such organisms may be destroyed by various means, describing several modes which might be adopted in carrying out such inquiries. In conclusion he mentioned impurities found in natural ice, and also two methods of examination of rain and air.

— In the death of Th. C. von Siebold, at the age of 80, Germany has lost one of her foremost biologists, while as a comparative anatomist he has held a prominent position for over fifty years. He will be remembered for his *Comparative Anatomy of the Invertebrates*, which was translated into English by Burnett in 1854, and is still nearly indispensable; for his fruitful labors on parthenogenesis in bees, saw-flies, moths, the Branchiopodidæ and Apodidæ, his work on the Salmonidæ and their hybrids, and on intestinal worms, which made him second to none of the biologists of Europe, not even excepting Darwin. He was, with Professor Kölliker, the founder of Siebold and Kölliker's *Zeitschrift für wissenschaftliche Zoologie*, a journal which has done more than any other to elevate the tone and spirit of biological research. He was a most unaffected man, most cordial in his reception of young men, and he died at Munich full of honors.

— The Official Gazette of India reports that in 1883 the number of persons killed by wild beasts and poisonous snakes were 22,905, against 22,125 in 1882. 20,057 deaths were due to the bites of poisonous animals; 985 persons were devoured by tigers, 287 by wolves, and 217 by leopards. The loss of cattle amounted to 47,478 animals, an increase of 771 over the preceding year. While most of the deaths of human beings was due to the bite of snakes, only 1644 cattle were thus poisoned. More than three-quarters of the deaths took place in Bengal and in the provinces of the north-west. 19,890 dangerous animals were killed during the year.

— In a recent memoir by F. A. Forel on the deep fauna of Swiss lakes, he corrects the facts and theories which he had previously advanced on the origin of the blind Gammarus and Asellus of the deep parts of the lakes. Formerly he attributed them to direct emigration from a littoral fauna, which, penetrating into a region devoid of light, had there lost the visual organ and pigment. New researches have now led him to conclude that these blind animals have descended from cave-inhabiting forms which had already become differentiated in the dark subterranean waters.

— The April number of the Journal of the Royal Microscopical Society contains Rev. Mr. Dallinger's notable address on the life-history of the monads, illustrated by three excellent plates. He concludes that the vital processes in these lowest organisms are as "orderly, rigid and immutable as in the most complex organisms," though as in higher animals allowing free scope to the action of natural selection.

— The *Annals and Magazine of Natural History* for January last publishes an article from the *Illustrated Melbourne Post* for Sept. 24, 1864, in which it is stated that about ten months previous an *Ornithorhynchus* laid "two eggs which were white, soft and without shell."

— ERRATA.—In Vol. XVIII, p. 1259, and Vol. XIX, p. 277, it is stated that two trilobites have been discovered in the Cretaceous rocks of Australia. This is an unfortunate error which our readers will please correct.

P. 293, lines 10 from top and 2 from bottom, for emarginate read marginate.

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## PROCEEDINGS OF SCIENTIFIC SOCIETIES.

NATIONAL ACADEMY OF SCIENCES.—This body met in Washington, D. C., April 21st. The following papers were read :

1. Methods of measuring the cubic capacity of Crania, by J. S. Billings and Dr. Matthews, U.S.A.
2. On winged insects from a palæontological point of view, by S. H. Scudder of Cambridge, Mass.
3. On the Syncarida, a hitherto undescribed group of extinct malacostracous Crustacea, by A. S. Packard of Providence, R. I.
4. On the Gampsonychidæ, an undescribed family of fossil schizopod Crustacea, by A. S. Packard of Providence, R. I.
5. On the Anthracaridæ, a family of Carboniferous macrurous decapod Crustacea, allied to the Eryonidæ, by A. S. Packard of Providence, R. I.
6. On the coral reefs of the Sandwich islands, by Alexander Agassiz.
7. On the origin of the fauna and flora of the Sandwich islands, by Alexander Agassiz.
8. On the classification of natural silicates, by T. Sterry Hunt of Montreal, Canada.
9. On the cause of the progressive movement of areas of low pressure, by Elias Loomis of Yale College.
10. On the ratio of the meter to the yard, by C. B. Comstock.
11. An account of certain stars observed by Flamsteed, supposed to have disappeared, by C. H. F. Peters, Hamilton College, N. Y.
12. On the submarine geology of the approaches to New York, by J. E. Hilgard and A. Lindenkohl.
13. A biographical notice of the late Dr. J. J. Woodward, U.S.A., was read at this meeting by J. S. Billings.
14. The orders of fishes, by Theodore Gill.
15. On the organization of the tribe, by J. W. Powell.
16. On certain lunarine qualities due to the action of Jupiter, and discovered by E. Nelson, by G. W. Hill.
17. On the Pre-tertiary Vertebrata of Brazil, by E. D. Cope.
18. On the phylogeny of the placental Mammalia, by E. D. Cope.
19. On some recent observations upon the rotation and surface markings of Jupiter, by C. A. Young.
20. On the value of the Ohm, by H. A. Rowland.
21. On the vanadium minerals : Vanadinite, endlicheite and descloizite.